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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Chou En-lai, Premier of the State Council
T'ang Wen-sheng, (Interpreter)
Mrs. Yang Yu-yung (Interpreter)
Stenographer

Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger
Ambassador David Bruce
Commander Jonathan T. Howe, NSC Staff
Mrs. Wilma G. Hall, Notetaker

DATE AND TIME: Tuesday, November 13, 1973
10:00 p.m. - 12:30 a.m.

PLACE: The Great Hall of the People
Peking

SUBJECT: Marines, Southeast Asia

Prime Minister Chou: There are a few other matters we should discuss. First, on the matter of the Marines. Do you have them everywhere in the world?

Secretary Kissinger: In every Embassy in every part of the world. I don't know why it is -- it is tradition. The concern our people have is if we remove them in one place, it will set up competition in another place. Then we have to find civilian guards and that's more complex.

Prime Minister Chou: And in countries that used to be Socialist, do they wear uniforms?

Secretary Kissinger: They wear military uniforms, yes, although we don't insist on their wearing uniforms.

Prime Minister Chou: On the other hand, do they send their military personnel with arms to your country?

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Secretary Kissinger: No. What you have said is absolutely logical. What we have said is traditional. Logically you are absolutely right and if you insist, we would withdraw them without any hard feelings.

Prime Minister Chou: For instance, during Ambassador Bruce's experience in Britain, Germany and France, did they not ask for any reciprocity?

Ambassador Bruce: In that sense, no.

Secretary Kissinger: But not as guards.

Ambassador Bruce: But our Marines do not wear uniforms. They did. [Ambassador Bruce gives explanation] I think the real difficulty, as I understand it, is that our 6 Marines make a recognizable unit. They are the elite of our military in their own opinion. They are the oldest service with a history that extends back some 198 years. With 400 people at the Soviet Embassy, some must be guards. But I don't know who the guards are.

The other embassies have their guards too. They are probably KGB. They are not Soviet Marines or at least they are not recognizable to us as such.

Prime Minister Chou: The Soviet Embassy is probably less concerned with security than intelligence or KGB activities.

Ambassador Bruce: I think they probably are KGB guards. You are right.

Prime Minister Chou: And they don't admit that they are such if you bring up the subject.

Secretary Kissinger: That's the problem.

Prime Minister Chou: This is the first time I knew of the military being established in diplomatic missions throughout the world. 198 years being established throughout the world. Then when you establish diplomatic relations with a new country, you must notify them of this.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes. Our position has always been that the Embassy is extraterritorial and that we can put anyone in there we want as guards.

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Prime Minister Chou: Does that mean that they do not openly make public that they are Marines in other countries?

Secretary Kissinger: In every other country I am familiar with, they wear their uniforms. Because of the concern you have expressed, they are not worn in China. But the guards in embassies all over the world I am familiar with have always been Marines.

Prime Minister Chou: They might not necessarily all be in military uniforms.

Secretary Kissinger: They wore their uniforms here on duty until July 4th.

Prime Minister Chou: They are internal? They don't stand outside the gate?

Ambassador Bruce: We have a PLA at the gate. They wear their uniform only inside the building.

Prime Minister Chou: So that is something new to me.

Ambassador Bruce: One of their difficulties is they live in an apartment and they put up a poster saying anyone that wants to join the Marine Corps will have a perfectly wonderful life. [Laughter all around] They got no recruits. [Laughter all around]

Prime Minister Chou: Then do all other countries agree to your tradition?

Secretary Kissinger: I know of no exception. Uganda threw out our Marines two days before everyone left.

Prime Minister Chou: I read about that in the papers.

Secretary Kissinger: But I don't believe there is any other exception. It is an easily solved issue anyway.

Prime Minister Chou: Yes, it can be easily solved. First of all, they would not contact others, that is, persons other than those of the Liaison Office, in the name of the Marines.

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Ambassador Bruce: I have got to confess that these Marines are a gay lot of people. There are six of them in one room. [Ambassador Bruce tells about their dances and the fact that their female neighbors appreciated it.] [Laughter all around]

[Secretary Kissinger aside to Cmdr. Howe: Can't you square this away with Zumwalt? We are not running a rest camp. They have just got to be brought under control.]

Prime Minister Chou: There is some good from the study of historical matters and traditions but on the other hand, the customs of a sovereign country must be respected. We must try to find some and settle between the two. For instance, we are not accustomed to such matters. In other countries we have internal security but not the PLA.

Secretary Kissinger: I would hate to think what would happen in Washington if members of the People's Liberation Army showed up to protect their office. So I have to say with regard to logic, you are absolutely right.

Ambassador Bruce: [Tells about the fact that when the Marines couldn't wear their uniforms, they had to buy civilian clothes and DOD wouldn't pay for civilian clothes so they had a morale problem.]

Secretary Kissinger: We shouldn't spend our time on this. If you agree to let them stay and you tell us what you want us to do, we will see what is possible. If those six can't live without a dance floor, then we will get six who can. So if you would tell us exactly what you want us to do, then we can handle them. We will tell them what they can do.

Prime Minister Chou: The first thing we believe is that it would be best if they do not wear military uniforms. We do not care if they switch out of civilian clothes in their bedroom. But when they come out, we do not wish to see them in uniforms. As for their weapons, they will need them only for internal security purposes. I hope they will not carry them on the streets or outside the Liaison Office. We do not care if they are not Marines. We would show no preference as to whatever persons you would like to pick. Indeed, we do think it would be quite sensational if the People's Liberation Army would appear in Washington. [Laughter all around]

Secretary Kissinger: It might even take some attention away from Watergate.

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Prime Minister Chou: It might also be interesting to put some of our Red Guards in Washington. Perhaps your long-haired youth would pay visits to them. We think that at the early stage of having established Liaison Offices (our goal) is to work in a harmonious way and not create trouble for each other.

Southeast Asia

Secretary Kissinger: I have one point I just wanted to mention. I think a major offensive in Vietnam would be against everyone's interest, especially if it were done with weapons provided massively from outside. We are certainly using our influence with our friends to maintain restraint.

Prime Minister Chou: With regard to this issue, recently we have received two documents from Vietnam and we have not yet released them. One reason is your presence in Peking. They have made clear in those documents that the provocations are not from them but from Thieu. They have no intention of launching a major offensive now. I have discussed this matter with Le Duan, Pham Van Dong, General Giap and also . . . * when they passed through here on various occasions.

Secretary Kissinger: He is my new colleague, although I know Le Duc Tho better.

Prime Minister Chou: And they have all assured me they have no desire to launch a major offensive now. They are sending certain materials southward but that is only for building a road. Some of our people have been south of the 17th parallel in Quang Tri Province and they have seen there that it has been leveled by bombing. They have had to begin from scratch. We accredited our Ambassador to them and he stayed there to present his credentials. They lived in tents. And they are mainly concentrating on building up their production. We not long ago sent a ship with feed grains. They (GVN) attacked it saying that it was filled with military equipment. Actually it was food grains.

Secretary Kissinger: We have no objection to civilian equipment but when it is transported in tanks, we get worried. We are not talking about China.

Prime Minister Chou: We heard that Thieu mentioned 500 tanks and 500 guns from major sides. I asked our friends about this and they said it could not

* The name did not sound like Nguyen Duy Trinh but it pr. . . . was.

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possibly be true. From here I can hear our Cambodian friends complain that they are not receiving enough military support from North Vietnam.

Secretary Kissinger: That has other reasons.

Prime Minister Chou: But according to our account, it is extremely meager. You can hear Sihanouk on this issue.

T'ang Wen-sheng: You left the material you wanted to give the Premier about correspondents in Cambodia on the conference table in the Guest House.

Secretary Kissinger: I intended that.

T'ang Wen-sheng: Mr. Lord said that and the Premier picked it up.

Prime Minister Chou: From what we know, they have no such intentions.

Secretary Kissinger: We are prepared to help the North in rehabilitation. However much military equipment there is in the north, it is a fair amount. If the North does not get a major amount of military equipment from outside, then it can't start a major attack.

Prime Minister Chou: That is true. But to our knowledge small frictions have never ceased.

Secretary Kissinger: That is true and that is inevitable.

Prime Minister Chou: Thieu has concentrated all the people in villages. So the population has become very concentrated in small areas without enough land. There is a lack of food. I think it would be impossible for you to provide them the amount of food grains. The population there has always worked for peace so they could return and till the land. And that is where the contradiction arises. And that is where the friction often comes from because the National Liberation Forces want to make it possible for the people to go back to their homelands and till their lands. Thieu is fearful of this and it often results in minor conflicts.

Secretary Kissinger: Minor conflicts are inevitable and we would not involve ourselves in them. If it was a problem like 1972, it would present a problem for us and we would engage ourselves.

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Prime Minister Chou: There have been several major conflicts. Like in 1968, 1970, and then February 1971, Route 9 in Laos. There were two offensives in 1968. One was TET and one was that summer. Then in February 1971 there was Route 9 in Laos. And then in 1972, it was on a larger scale south of the 17th parallel and into the four areas.

[Secretary Kissinger to Cmdr. Howe: What's the name of that place that was besieged?]

[Commander Howe: An Loc.]

Secretary Kissinger: The South Vietnamese had the most incompetent General in military history in charge of that. In four months of fighting, there were four divisions against one brigade, yet he could not move 10 miles to relieve them.

Prime Minister Chou: You mean the General in charge of An Loc?

Secretary Kissinger: The General in charge south of An Loc.

Prime Minister Chou: He wasn't able to contact them?

Secretary Kissinger: He never made it, no. But he drew beautiful maps with arrows.

Prime Minister Chou: In my opinion, I do not believe there will be major fighting in Vietnam because their views are different from those they held before the ceasefire.

Secretary Kissinger: That would be a serious matter.

Prime Minister Chou: Because you mentioned an evolution we had discussed.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but that requires some time.

Prime Minister Chou: It will take several years.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

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Prime Minister Chou: And exactly what the outcome will be will depend on themselves and also on the political settlement. We think it would be good if there was a political settlement.

Secretary Kissinger: We agree.

Prime Minister Chou: There does not seem to be any major fighting in Cambodia. We think it would be best for you to let go of that area.

Secretary Kissinger: If there is no major fighting, we will not interfere.

Prime Minister Chou: You have no treaty obligations to Lon Nol as you have with Thieu and the military dictatorship in Bangkok has undergone changes but they won't be of very major portions. It would be relatively better if that area could be one of peace and neutrality.

Secretary Kissinger: I will speak frankly. Our major problem with Cambodia is that the opponents of President Nixon want to use it as an example of the bankruptcy of his whole policy. So if there is a very rapid collapse, it will be reflected in our other policies. That frankly is our only concern.

Prime Minister Chou: Why is it that Senator Mansfield is in favor of letting loose and allowing Sihanouk to return?

Secretary Kissinger: Senator Mansfield is first of all an isolationist in the classical tradition. He is a true isolationist from the Middle West. Secondly, he has a sentimental attachment to Prince Sihanouk which is not related to reality and not reciprocated in any way. Because I think the Prince is a very shrewd calculator.

[Secretary Kissinger to Cmdr. Howe: See if they want to have a leadership meeting about my trip next week. Ask Scowcroft tonight.]

Prime Minister Chou: And because we also know of it. It is futile to do as he has. Because he also knows you will not meet him, he spoke very loudly at the Non-Aligned Nations Conference. He abused not only you but me.

Secretary Kissinger: We are not opposed to Prince Sihanouk's return.

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Prime Minister Chou: But they do not wish to do it that way. The only thing I wish to bring to your attention is that the Soviet Union wants to have a hand in that pie.

Secretary Kissinger: Not with our cooperation.

Prime Minister Chou: They might try to do it with French. Thank you for bringing his mother here. It was a humanitarian effort.

Secretary Kissinger: That was only the right thing to do.

Prime Minister Chou: And when you were very enthusiastically discussing this matter with Lon Nol, your charge d'affaires discussed it with Lon Nol and the Commission and said that to enable the Queen to come to China, you might be able to provide the plane and medical personnel. But the French doctors who had been treating her for so long were so emotionally disturbed that they were on the verge of tears. Your charge understood the situation and let the French do it.

Secretary Kissinger: We finally got our charge under control. It was the first constructive thing he had been able to do in a year. So he is very grateful to you for giving him this opportunity.

Prime Minister Chou: Because the French were thinking after having taken care of her for one whole year, you were just brushing them aside.

What do you now think of the situation in Bangkok?

Secretary Kissinger: Thailand will move to a more neutralist position slowly and carefully. I don't know whether the Prime Minister is aware that the Indians are very interested in Thailand.

Prime Minister Chou: And the Soviet Union.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes, but they want to offer a friendship treaty, the same as they have with the Soviet Union. The Indians have told us they would do it and the Thais have asked our opinion.

Prime Minister Chou: Are you familiar with the new Prime Minister?

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Secretary Kissinger: I frankly have never heard of him. I frankly think he will be a transitional figure.

Prime Minister Chou: The King probably trusts him.

Secretary Kissinger: Yes.

Prime Minister Chou: Their Vice Premier and the son of the Premier went together to Taiwan to try to get help from Chiang Kai-shek.

Secretary Kissinger: I know Thanom very well. He is not anti-Chinese.

Prime Minister Chou: Slightly, but this only meant that he would not engage in trade with China.

Secretary Kissinger: The Thais are afraid of China in general because of their population.

Prime Minister Chou: It is the conservative nature of those Chinese. And when the Australian Prime Minister came, he discussed with me the Southeast Asian countries and their establishing relations with China. We discussed if it would be possible to establish relations with Singapore. I wonder if a communique or public declaration that none of those Singapore citizens would maintain dual citizenship might set him at ease.

Secretary Kissinger: Would you like me to discuss this with Lee Kuan Yew? I think he takes me more seriously than he does Whitlam.

Prime Minister Chou: That is, we would be willing to establish relations in a pattern which would set other countries at ease because a large percentage of the Singapore population is Chinese.

Secretary Kissinger: I will talk to him.

Prime Minister Chou: And Singapore being a free port, we think it would be better for them to maintain a neutral position. The Soviet Union is casting a covetous eye on them.

Secretary Kissinger: Lee Kuan Yew is primarily worried about the organization of Communist groups.

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Prime Minister Chou: To my knowledge there is none there. There are perhaps some leftists but to my knowledge there are no Communist parties in Singapore.

Secretary Kissinger: But he is not against the People's Republic. He is afraid you will engage in subversive activities there.

Prime Minister Chou: We are not going to subvert them. We haven't even subverted Hongkong. Why would we go there. Why give up Hongkong at our door step to go so far. Hongkong has 4 million while Singapore has slightly over one and a half million.

Secretary Kissinger: I will send a letter to Lee Kuan Yew.

Prime Minister Chou: He has not been so bad to us. There is a branch of the bank of China there.

Secretary Kissinger: He is not against you. I know him very well. He is one of the few leaders with whom it is worth talking. Aside from his having power, he has a great understanding of England.

Prime Minister Chou: He is a very eloquent speaker. I believe he was trained by McDonald.

Secretary Kissinger: He was at the London School of Economics.

Prime Minister Chou: Because McDonald had been Governor General of Singapore.

Secretary Kissinger: He always comes to Harvard once every two years.

Prime Minister Chou: You mean the son of Ramsey McDonald?

Secretary Kissinger: Lee Kuan Yew comes to Harvard and shocks my liberal colleagues by calling them fools. They are not used to Socialists calling them that.

[Note: At 12:30 a.m. on November 14, the meeting adjourned for about 30 minutes and then resumed with additional participants to discuss the communique.]

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